

# Tenant Action News

Vol. 6 No. 1

Serving Newark Tenants

Summer 1995



*Newark tenants have been fighting back against cuts in affordable housing programs. Shown above, Christy Davis, Chief of Staff for Senator Frank Lautenberg, addresses the crowd at a rally April 6, 1995 outside the Federal Building. Ed De Veaux, from Senator Bradley's Office, looks on. See story on p. 9.*

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# Around Town

## **Zion Towers**

Tenants at Zion Towers gave Jose Cintron, Regional Representative of Secretary Cisneros of HUD, a tour of their building during March, 1995. Tenants have filed a petition against their current manager for incompetence. Recently, tenant organizing efforts have been hampered by harrassment of key organizers. The manager and owner are not allowing the Tenant Association to use the community room for meetings, which is against HUD regulations. The harrassment of organizers was highlighted in a meeting between the HUD Tenants' Coalition and the Director of the NJHMFA May 2.

## **Garden Spires**

Residents at Garden Spires have had an excellent tenant meeting. They are picking new officers, and setting up a screening committee. They have a new mail room, a new community room, and are trying to get 24 hour security. The boilers (a problem in the past) are now being fixed. A mini-playground will open June 3, and a mini-police station may be located in the building.

## **129 Chancellor Ave.**

Tenants at this building are battling a large (10 - 15%) rent increase. Tenants went before the Rent Control Board on Feb. 14, and were told that the landlord "couldn't possibly" be given an increase based on what tenants told them. However on Feb. 25, tenants received a letter saying the increase had been granted. Many people had to move. Now a lawyer is fighting the increase because, tenants say, the landlord did not present correct information to the Rent Control Board. The fight goes on.

## **Forest Hill Apartments**

Tenants who organized a meeting with the owner and manager are being threatened with eviction in this building. The owner had pledged to make repairs, and to hold rents at a "reasonable" rate in spite of this buildings' loss of tax abatement. However, as soon as the meeting was over, tenant leaders received eviction notices, a clear case of harrassment of those who spoke out. Rents in some apartments have more than doubled, and there are many vacancies. (This building was converted from affordable rental apartments to condominiums. It's tax abatement is the subject of an ongoing investigation).

## **6 Pomona Ave.**

The Tenants Association at 6 Pomona Ave. has been battling a possibly illegal lease and were in court for refusal to sign. They are now appealing the lower court's decision. Six Pomona Ave. has seen the slow decrease of services in the building. The air conditioning system in the building is being taken out, and no alternative has yet been agreed upon. Other main issues include trying to get back the parking lot gate, and the garbage compactor, and changes in the lease which will make it acceptable to tenants. The Tenants Association at 6 Pomona Ave. has recently joined the HUD Tenants' Coalition, and publishes an informative newsletter.

## **Georgia King Village**

Tenants have a Church Sunday School and other activities for people of all ages. Recently, representatives from Congressmen Payne and Senator Lautenberg's Offices have attended their building meetings.



# Around Town



*Children at Aspen Riverpark enjoy the crafts at a Saturday recreation program provided by the Tenants Association working with St. Stephan's United Church of Christ, and First Congregational United Church Christ of Westfield.*

## Colonnades

Tenants at this building took to the street in a demonstration during October to protest declining building conditions. This protest caught the attention of the **Star Ledger** which followed up with two articles about the complex. Elevators often do not work, and security is inadequate. Residents complain about often having to walk up and down stairs. There are 560 apartments on 20 floors. Residents say, "We are tired of being treated like second class citizens." (Star Ledger, 10/24/94) Eight months after the murder of tenant activist Jean Kelly in her apartment, Gerald Williams, who was employed there as a maintenance man at the time, was arrested and charged. (Star Ledger 12/14, 12/15/94). New tensions arose when 3 fires between Christmas Eve and New Years Day revealed that sprinkler and ventilation systems were not working. Due to the consistent efforts of the Colonnade Tenants

Association, extensive inspections by Newark Code Inspectors took place in February 1995.

## St. James Towers

St. James Tenants Association is running a Summer of Fun Program for children, ages 7 to 14, every day, with breakfast and lunch, and a weekly trip. Children will enjoy a variety of craft activities. The Ping Pong Club is running tournaments for boys. There will also be a bus ride for older citizens to Atlantic City. Tenants are wondering why an advertisement offers new tenants a free month's rent. "What about those of us who have been living here? It doesn't seem fair," commented one person.

## Hallmark House

The problem with noise continues in one elevator in this building. Tenants have complained to environmental agencies about this. Another elevator is having major problems. Bricks are missing from the sides of the building. The boiler is not in a proper "saddle", and the floor shakes when the boiler ignites. Cold air came in through some of the windows this winter. Tenant representatives recently presented their concerns at City Council, and met with HUD to show them pictures of problems in their building.

## Clinton Arms

This is the building in which HUD found widespread fraud. Some things HUD cited the building for are still not fixed, according to the tenants. One tenant is battling to get payment for damaged carpeting and furniture due to a leak which was not properly fixed in the apartment above her. Raw sewage is still coming out of the ground in one spot at the complex.

*More Around Town on page 6*



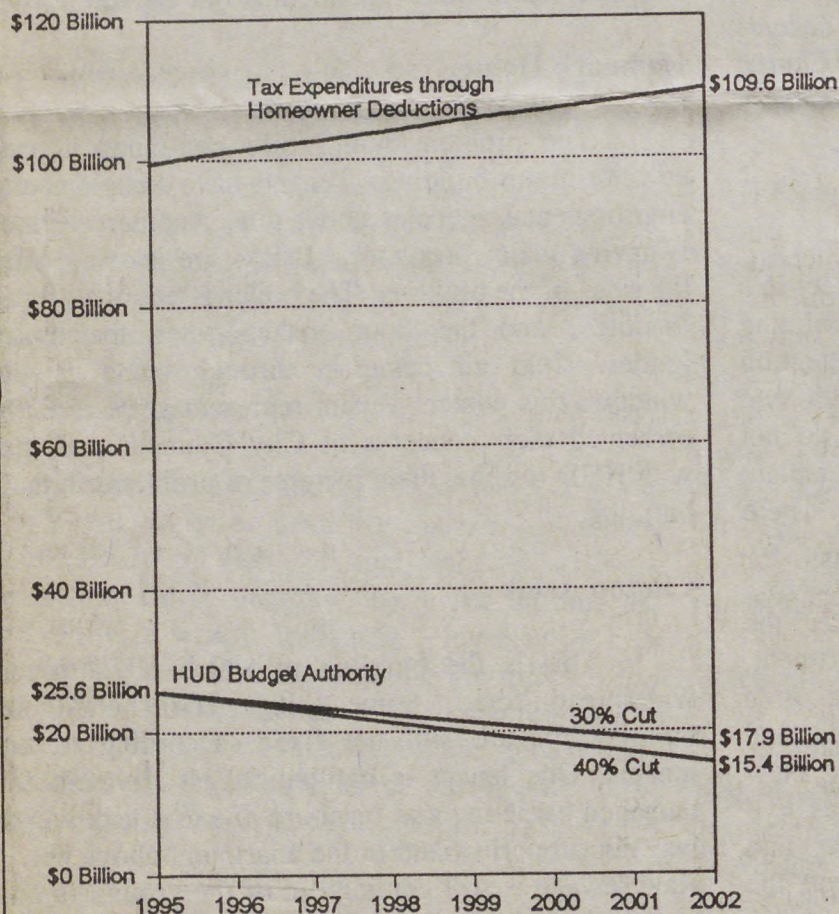
## It's Now Or Never For Affordable Housing Programs

As you will see from other stories in this newspaper, Newark tenants have been fighting back against proposed federal cuts to affordable housing programs. The chart below from the National Low Income Housing Services shows how federal spending for homeowner deductions is likely to increase under the new budget, while money for affordable housing programs may be cut by as much as 40%! If you are concerned about having affordable housing, let your federal representatives here from you **now**.

### Congressional Phone Numbers

Senator Frank Lautenberg: 645-3030  
 Senator Bill Bradley: 639-2860  
 Congressman Donald Payne: 645-3213  
 Congressman Bob Menendez: 222-2828

### Federal Spending on Housing Potential Budget Authority Cuts vs. Tax Expenditures



- Reductions to HUD's budget authority over the next seven years are estimated to be at least 30% and more likely 40% or higher under "balanced budget glidepath" assumptions
- While HUD's budget authority is being reduced, the costs to the Treasury from homeowner deductions continue to increase without limit
- Tax expenditures on homeowner deductions dwarf HUD's current budget authority, even before any cuts are made
- The wealthiest 20% of the population receives 60% of all federal housing subsidies; the poorest 20% receives less than 20%
- While tax expenditures, which benefit primarily higher income homeowners, cost over \$100 billion and continue to rise, programs that benefit low income households are being threatened

Source: Low Income Housing Information Service



# National Alliance of HUD Tenants Growing

The National Alliance of HUD Tenants (NAHT) now has more than 100 tenant associations and coalitions who are members, representing thousands of tenants in every region of the country. NAHT's purpose is to preserve all HUD-assisted housing and to improve the quality of life for all HUD tenants by:

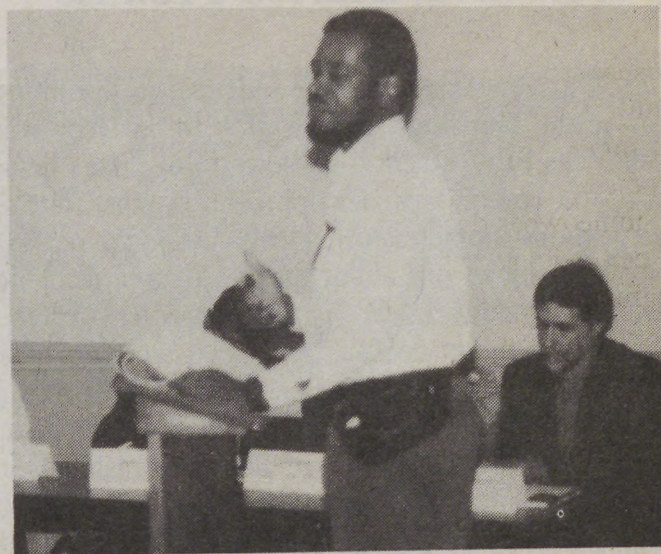
- 1) building tenant organization and power
- 2) promoting tenant ownership and tenant control over management
- 3) making HUD accountable to HUD tenants.

In the short time since it began, NAHT has already accomplished a great deal. NAHT helped write a "Tenant Rights" brochure that will be circulated to 1.6 million HUD tenants when they sign their lease. NAHT was involved in writing the new handbook for all managers, which spells out tenant rights clearer than any previous handbook. NAHT sponsored a National "Save Our Homes Day" on Feb. 11, 1995, when tenants from over 20 cities held press conferences or rallies about the proposals to cut affordable housing programs currently being discussed by Congress and the Clinton Administration.

NAHT has a 14 member Board which is elected. (One of the members is Bill Good, from the HUD Tenants' Coalition in Newark). The Board meets with HUD Secretary Cisneros twice a year. The Board also helps organize Regional meetings with HUD officials on a regular basis. (One of these took place in Jan, 1995 in Newark).

On May 20-22, NAHT held its first independent annual meeting. Hundreds of tenants from all over the country were there, including a delegation of 4 members from the HUD Tenants' Coalition in Newark.

"It is extremely important that tenants have a national organization of their own, through which we can make our voices heard," said Frank Hutchins from the HUD Tenants' Coalition. "Especially now, as Congress and the Administration talk about ways to scale down or eliminate affordable housing programs, we need to be able to make our feelings known, and to fight to save our homes."



*Bill Good, Newark's representative on the National Alliance for HUD Tenants Board. (Listening is Richard Cammarieri, from Newark Fighting Back and Newark Coalition for Neighborhoods).*

## HUD Grant Awarded

The HUD Tenants' Coalition has received a 3 year grant from HUD (Department of Housing & Urban Development) to do tenant organizing in certain privately owned HUD-assisted properties in the Newark area. HTC was one of 10 groups around the United States who received an organizing grant.

The properties which will be targetted are those which face "prepayment", where the owner is eligible to "prepay" the mortgage. If this happens, tenants could face tremendous increases in rents. Under HUD regulations, landlords must follow certain procedures when applying to prepay their mortgage, and tenants have certain rights. The HUD Tenants' Coalition has hired member and tenant Bill Good to work on this project. If you live in one of these buildings, you'll be hearing from Bill, or you can reach him at 643-7711.



## Affordable Housing: A Broken Hearted Promise

This report summarizes and presents testimony given at the **Housing Speak Out** held on Dec. 3 at St. Patricks Pro-Cathedral in Newark. Speakers from non-profit community development groups, tenant organizations, homeless organizations and advocates, and others spoke out about the need for affordable housing in Newark. A panel consisting of the following individuals and groups listened to the testimony presented: Michaelene Loughlin, Director of Seton Hall Law School Center for Social Justice; Sister Cathy Daly, Director of Social Ministries for Catholic Community Services; David Stephens, Housing Policy Director of the Urban League of Essex County; Richard Cammarieri, Director of Newark Coalition for Neighborhoods; Susie M. McGhee, President of the NAACP; Jeannette Page-Hawkins, Director of Newark Emergency Services for Families; Rev. Judy Vasile, pastor of St. Stephan's United Church of Christ. Councilwoman Mildred Crump could not attend due to a illness in her family. Congressman Donald Payne, another panel member, arrived late due to a schedule conflict. The report is available for \$2 from the HUD Tenants' Coalition. Call 344-7210.



*David Stephens, Director of Housing Policy Issues for the Urban League of Essex County speaks at the Press Conference Feb. 15. Looking on is Vic De Luca, from the Newark Coalition for Low Income Housing.*

## Coming Soon: Tenant Workshops

Each year, the HUD Tenants' Coalition offers free tenant workshops on a variety of topics, and an annual Tenant Rights Conference. This year, some of the topics that may be offered are: Recertification: How It Is Supposed To Happen; Basic Tenant Rights; The Court System & Tenants; Tenants Rights Concerning Lead Poisoning; How To Start A Tenant Organization & Keep It Going; Analyzing Rent Increase Applications.

If you are on the HUD Tenants' Coalition mailing list, you will receive specifics about the workshops in the mail. If you are not on the mailing list, and would like to receive information on the dates, times and locations of these workshops, call Nancy Zak at 344-7210.

## Around Town, continued:

### 1060 Broad St.

A list of complaints presented by tenants to the manager at the end of January have resulted in almost everything being fixed. However, a few problems - like clogged up exhaust vents and noisy elevators, elevators which do not work properly - continue to be problems, according to the tenants. One woman went to the hospital after an elevator skipped several floors and she was injured.

### Amity Village

Tenants at Amity Village have formed a Tenants Association, with help from Tri-City Peoples' Corporation. Tenants report dirty buildings, rats, overflowing garbage, lack of security, broken mailboxes, drug traffic and numerous other problems. Good luck Amity tenants. Working together you will make a difference.



# HUD Tenant Coalition Meets With NJHFMA Director

On May 2, 1995, the HUD Tenants' Coalition met with Mr. Ira Oskowsky, Acting Director of the New Jersey Housing Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHFMA) to discuss issues which affect the HUD-assisted buildings who are also monitored by NJHFMA. Among the NJHFMA buildings who had representatives at the meeting were: Douglass Harrison Apartments, Norfolk Square, Amity Village, New Hope Village, and Zion Towers.

The agenda covered a range of issues pertaining to quality of life in the buildings, and NJHFMA's role, including harassment of tenant organizers, use of community rooms for meetings, certification of security guards, etc.

One of the positive results from the meeting is the agreement that Tenant Associations should receive a copy of rent increase application documents as soon as they are filed (in addition to the manager keeping a copy in his office). In the past, some tenants have had difficulty getting these important documents in time, so they can review and comment on them.

Another agreement is that there be regular meetings between the Coalition and the NJHFMA officials.

Because the agenda was so extensive, a follow up meeting will take place in June 1995.

The meeting with Mr. Oskowsky continues a spring of activity for the HUD Tenants' Coalition. Here are some of the other activities HTC has been involved in:

- \* HTC hosted the Jan. 7 Regional Meeting with HUD Officials, when more than 75 residents from New York State and New Jersey attended a meeting in Newark.

- \* On March 11, a van load of Newark tenants attended a second Regional meeting, this time in New York City.

- \* In March, HTC tenants hosted a tour of 4 HUD-assisted buildings for Jose Cintron, Secretary Cisneros' Regional Representative. The buildings visited were: Georgia King Village, 6 Pomona Ave., Zion Towers, and the Colonnades.



*Connie Loukatos (left), Director of the Multi-Family Housing Division for the Newark Office of the Department of Housing & Urban Development, makes a point during the Jan. 7 Regional Meeting held in Newark.*

- \* HTC residents attended the annual Low Income Housing Service Conference in Washington, D.C. in February and the National Alliance of HUD Tenants Conference in May.

- \* HTC worked with other groups to hold a **Housing Speak Out**, Dec. 3, a **Demonstration Against Cuts in Housing Programs** on Feb. 14, a **Press Conference** to protest cuts on Feb. 15, and a **Rally at the Federal Building** on April 6.

- \* HTC published **Affordable Housing: A Broken Hearted Promise**, and sent this report to all local, county and federal officials who deal with housing policy. Included in the report were results from the 1994 HTC Building Conditions Survey (see P.6)

- \* HTC held its Third Annual Benefit Concert on April 22 (see article p.8).

The Coalition also continued to help individual buildings, whether by drafting sample by-laws, monitoring Tenant Association elections, finding expert accounting or legal assistance, or providing moral support by attending a building meeting.

For more information call: 344-7210.



# Tenant Concert A Ringing, Singing Success!

The 3rd Annual Tenants in Action Benefit Concert was held April 22, 1995 at Essex County College. Tenant leader Elouise Hunter recruited some wonderful musicians, who donated their time and talent to this fundraising event. All of the money raised will be used to continue tenant organizing in Newark.

During the evening, Frank Hutchins presented a special appreciation award to Don Lubin, from Suburban Housing Corporation, for his help to tenants over the years.

The musicians who entertained were: Keronda Hunter from Rahway; Elder Larry C Terry and Choir from the Fellowship of Holiness Church; Evangelist E. Goodson; Elder Ernest Richard, Jr.; and Evangelist Elouise Hunter. Mr. T.T. McGimpsey was the MC.

The concert will be aired on cable television. The benefit was sponsored by the HUD Tenants' Coalition, Newark Coalition for Low Income Housing, Metropolitan Ecumenical Ministry, Newark Coalition for Neighborhoods, and Ironbound Community Corporation.



*Keronda Hunter, a high school student from Rahway, delighted the audience with her rendition of Mahalia Jackson.*



*Frank Hutchins presents an award to Don Lubin, from the Tenant Preservation Project, for his support for housing justice.*

## Newark Groups Working With Tenants

These groups can advise, help organize, put you in contact with others who have had your problem and solved it, help you get legal help, and tell you what tenants are doing city wide.

### \* Coalition To Save Rent Control

Frank Hutchins  
643-7711

### \* Newark Coalition For Low Income Housing

For tenants in public housing.  
Ask for Carol Sullivan or Edna Rashid at 824-6677

### \* HUD Tenants' Coalition

For residents of HUD-assisted privately-owned buildings. Nancy Zak, 344-7210

### \* Newark Coalition For Neighborhoods

Richard Cammarieri, 643-7711



# Rally In Newark Says "We Need Affordable Housing"

On April 6, 1995, tenants and supporters rallied outside the Federal Building in Newark to oppose the fact that Congress had voted to take back money already budgeted for affordable housing programs. The rally was coordinated by the Affordable Housing Network of New Jersey, working with the Newark HUD Tenants' Coalition, Newark Coalition for Neighborhoods, Newark Coalition for Low Income Housing, and the Newark Community Development Network.

Gerard Joab, Director of Newark Local Initiatives Support Corporation, chaired the rally and introduced the speakers. Among the tenants who spoke were: Mrs. Francis Houston, Tenant President at Georgia King Village; Maude Davis, Tenant President at New Hope Village; and Bill Good from Douglass Harrison Apartments. Carol Sullivan, Director of the Newark Coalition for Low Income Housing, and Yvonne Braime from Coalition to House the Homeless in Elizabeth, N.J., also spoke.

Federal officials who represent this area were invited to attend. Marvin Hackett representing Congressman Donald Payne spoke, and Ed DeVeaux, from Senator Bradley's Office, was in attendance.

Christy Davis, Chief of Staff for Senator Frank Lautenberg, read a statement, which included these words: "The Republican plan I've seen is not a Contract with America; it's a contract with the special interests, billion dollar corporations, and millionaires who renounce their American citizenship to avoid paying taxes. It's a contract **on** the poor, the middle class, and the elderly...Keep expressing your opposition to the Contract."

Diane Fuller read a statement from Congressman Bob Menendez, which reads (in part): "There is no sentiment among these new Republicans that we have a responsibility to provide decent housing, or to improve our inner city neighborhoods. They believe that if you are worth helping, you would already have been helped. They have already climbed to social success, and they are pulling up the ladder behind them...It is up to you to make yourselves



*Tenants and affordable housing supporters rally outside the Federal Building in Newark April 6.*

heard. It is time now for you to prepare to make sure you are never ignored again."

Maude Davis, a tenant at New Hope Village, said, "We are already suffering. We work 2 weeks a month just to pay our rent. We need to register to vote. We must send a message that we're not taking it anymore."

Nancy Zak, speaking for the HUD Tenants' Coalition, said, "This rally is just the first step. It is critical that you keep the pressure on Congress to help provide housing programs that are needed by low income people. Essex County already has 32,000 homeless persons (by its own estimates), and these cuts will just make this serious problem even worse."

For up to date information about what is happening to affordable housing programs at the moment in Congress, and how you can help, you can call:

Low Income Housing Information Service  
202-662-1530

Affordable Housing Network of N.J.  
609-393-3752

HUD Tenants' Coalition  
643-7711



## Resources

*The following are available from the HUD Tenants' Coalition. To order, call Nancy Zak, 344-7210.*

\* **Know Your Rights Fact Sheets.** These 2 fact sheets cover tenants rights on eviction, and most of the local ordinances in Newark. They are free.

\* **Truth In Renting Law.** This booklet covers the state laws which apply to tenants. Available for its cost, \$1. It is also available in Spanish.

\* **Knowing Where To Call.** A five page list of key phone numbers for tenants in Newark. Free *while they last*.

\* **Recertification.** This booklet was developed for a workshop and includes a summary of common questions and important documents during your recertification process. \$1 for duplication.

\* **New HUD pamphlet on tenants rights, and new HUD manager's handbook.** The pamphlet contains great information about your rights in HUD-assisted housing. The handbook contains the most current information, and this time tenants helped write it, so it should be helpful. It is unsure at press time exactly how to get these, but they do exist. Call the local HUD Office, 622-7900.

\* **No Easy Walk, Newark, 1980-1993.** Book of photographs of Newark's Central Ward by Helen Stummer available from Temple University Press for \$20.00 plus postage. Call 1-800-447-1656.

\* **Tenants Rights Manual: A Manual For Tenants Who Live in Privately Owned, Federally Subsidized Housing** (April 1992). This 161 book includes chapters on: HUD Housing Programs (definitions of terms of all major HUD-subsidized programs), Leases, Discrimination, Rents, Rent Increases, Tenant Organizing, Evictions, and many other topics. Copies are available from the Low Income Housing Information Service, 1012-14th St., N.W. Washington, DC 20005, (201) 662-1530. The cost is \$10 to members of LIHIS, \$20 to all others. Prepayment is required.



### ***Newark Residents Fight Back!***

*A speaker from the Coalition To House the Homeless in Elizabeth, N.J. addresses the crowd at a Feb. 14 march through downtown Newark to protest possible cuts in affordable housing programs. Newark residents and tenants joined in the march, sponsored by STEPS (Solutions To End Poverty Soon).*

*Newark residents have also collected thousands of postcards protesting the proposed housing voucher system and given or mailed them to President Clinton; called, met with and written their Congresspersons; participated in a Press Conference about the need for affordable housing on Feb. 15; held a Rally at the Federal Building on April 6, 1995. Continuing to bring pressure and make our voices heard is important if affordable housing is to be saved.*



## Public Housing: Up Or Down?

Two more buildings from the Columbus Homes public housing complex were blown up on April 2, 1995. The Newark Housing Authority wanted to blow these buildings up years ago. But the Newark Coalition For Low Income Housing took the Housing Authority to court, where they were ordered to build replacement apartments before they could blow up the buildings. NHA was required to build 1777 new townhouses.

"Because of the Low Income Housing Coalition's work, 264 families including 105 from the waiting list now live in new townhouses. Another 400 families will move into new units before the end of the year. All this would not have happened if we did not go to court to force one-to-one replacement," said Carol Sullivan, executive director of the Newark Coalition for Low Income Housing.

*"Because of the Coalition's work, 264 families including 105 from the waiting list now live in new townhouses. Another 400 families will move into new units before the end of the year."*

There is still a waiting list of 7000 families for public housing. In a press release the day of the dynamiting, Ms. Sullivan said, "We must ensure that all residents of Newark are assured clean, safe and affordable housing."

Public housing has recently been targetted by some members of Congress as an area to be cut, and thousands of public housing residents, including members of the Newark Coalition for Low Income Housing, travelled to Washington on May 17, to protest these proposals.

For more information on public housing, the Coalition's fight for replacement units and repairs in existing units, or what is happening to public housing in Congress, call Carol Sullivan at 824-6677.

## Numbers Every Tenant Should Know...

- Newark Rent Control Board  
Staff: 733-3675  
Administrator: 733-6362  
Copies of rent control ordinance.
- Rutgers Urban Legal Clinic  
15 Washington St.  
648-5576
- Newark City Clerk's Office  
733-3844 or 733-3669.  
To find out about city ordinances.
- Landlord Tenant Court  
621-5343 or 621-5346.
- Essex-Newark Legal Services  
106 Halsey St.  
624-4500
- Essex-Newark Legal Services  
Senior Citizen Unit  
672-3838, -3839, -3840, 3895.
- Rutgers Legal Aid Clinic  
15 Washington St.  
624-5300
- Newark Offices of Code Enforcement  
733-6470, 733-6471, 733-6481
- Newark Municipal Council  
733-3788

Special thanks to the following organizations and individuals for their recent financial or other support:

United Church of Christ, Newark Coalition for Neighborhoods, Campaign for Human Development, St. Stephan's United Church of Christ in Newark, United Church of Christ of Westfield, N.J., the IOLTA FUND, Ironbound Community Corporation, Sea Land Corporation, Metropolitan Ecumenical Ministry, the Funding Exchange, Essex Newark Legal Services, the Exxon Employee Fund, Consultants for Non-profits, Suburban Housing Corp., Milton Zisman, Rutgers Law School, and Seton Hall Center for Social Justice.



# Help Build Tenant Power In Newark!

The **Coalition To Save Rent Control (CTSRC)** & the **HUD Tenants' Coalition** have been volunteer organizations that help provide information on tenant rights and assists individual tenants in organizing their buildings. Clip this coupon and return it with any amount of money you can contribute to help continue this work.

- ☐ Here's my \$5 donation to this newsletter, keep it coming.
- ☐ I can't afford to subscribe, but keep me on the mailing list.
- ☐ Here's my subscription and a donation to help work for Tenant Awareness and Rights in Newark.
- ☐ \$10   ☐ \$20   ☐ \$25   ☐ other \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Checks should be made out to:  
**NCN - Tenant Project**  
and sent to NCN, 944 Broad St., Newark, N.J. 07102

Metropolitan Ecumenical Ministry  
525 Orange St.  
Newark, New Jersey 07107

Address Correction Requested

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US POSTAGE  
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Newark Public Library  
Attn: Valerie Austin  
5 Washington St.  
Newark NJ 07102